

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0904

C O N F I D E N T I A L OUAGADOUGOU 0304

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AO, OAU, UV

SUBJ: UPPER VOLTA'S POSITION ON ANGOLA

REF: STATE 017943

1. BECAUSE OF CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS WHICH HAS LED TO RESIGNATION OF LAMIZANA'S ENTIRE CABINET, I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO SEE EITHER THE PRESIDENT OR THE FOREIGN MINISTER SINCE RECEIPT OF REFTEL. I FINALLY SAW ZERBO FOR 30 MINUTES MORNING JANUARY 30. WHILE ZERBO'S RESIGNATION HAS BEEN ACCEPTED, HE WILL CONTINUE TO CARRY OUT THE DUTIES OF FOREIGN MINISTER UNTIL HIS SUCCESSOR HAS BEEN NAMED.

2. I WAS SURPRISED TO FIND ZERBO NOT ONLY WELL INFORMED ON THE ANGOLAN SITUATION BUT ALSO EXTREMELY OUTSPOKEN AND EMOTIONAL IN HIS CRITICISM OF SOVIET AND CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA. HE SAID THAT ANGOLA WAS IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A SOVIET COLONY AND THAT HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND HOW THE UNITED STATES COULD AFFORD TO LET THIS HAPPEN WITHOUT LIFTING A FINGER. SOME OF HIS AFRICAN COLLEAGUES WERE EVEN WONDERING WHETHER THERE WAS A SECRET UNDERSTANDING BY WHICH THE UNITED STATES WAS GIVING THE USSR A FREE HAND IN ANGOLA IN EXCHANGE FOR CONCESSIONS ON SALT. I ASSURED ZERBO THAT THIS WAS NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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THE CASE AND POINTED OUT THAT RECENT DECLARATIONS BY

SECRETARY KISSINGER AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHAUFELLE CLEARLY INDICATED THE USG'S CONCERN OVER THE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN ANGOLA.

3. ZERBO PLEADED FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE FNLA AND UNITA FORCES. HE SAID THE OAU WAS HELPLESS, EVENLY DIVIDED BETWEEN PRO AND ANTI-MPLA GOVERNMENTS. HE DID NOT EXPECT THAT THERE WOULD BE ANY DEFECTIONS ON EITHER SIDE. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES ONLY THE UNITED STATES COULD PREVENT A "CATASTROPHE". IF ANGOLA BECAME A SOVIET COLONY, ZAMBIA WOULD BE STRANDED AND ZAIRE WOULD BE SQUEEZED BETWEEN ANGOLA AND THE CONGO. BOTH GABON AND THE C.A.R. ALREADY FELT THREATENED AND THERE WAS NOT TIME TO LOSE.

4. AT THE END OF OUR CONVERSATION, ZERBO ASSURED ME THAT UPPER VOLTA WAS NOT ABOUT TO RECOGNIZE THE MPLA. HE WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT IF USG REMAINED INDIFFERENT TO THE FATE OF THE ANGOLAN NATION AND ITS IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS, UPPER VOLTA AND THE MODERATE AFRICAN COUNTRIES WOULD HAVE TO "DRAW THE PROPER CONCLUSIONS".

5. COMMENT: VEHEMENCE EXPRESSED BY ZERBO ON THIS OCCASION SUGGESTS THAT HE HAS GONE A LONG WAY SINCE HIS PRO-NORTH KOREAN SPEECH AT THE UNGA LAST FALL. IN THIS, HE UNDOUBTEDLY REFLECTS THE OPINION OF PRESIDENT LAMIZANA. WE KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT A NUMBER OF YOUNGER OFFICIALS AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ARE IN FAVOR OF RECOGNIZING THE MPLA. IT IS POSSIBLE ALSO THAT THE NEW TEAM WHICH WILL TAKE OVER THE GOVERNMENT WITHIN A FEW DAYS AND WHICH MAY INCLUDE SOME OF THESE YOUNGER OFFICIALS, WILL BE UNDER PRESSURE TO DEMONSTRATE A CHANGE IN DIRECTION, AND MAY SEIZE ON MPLA RECOGNITION ISSUE AS ONE WHICH WOULD APPEASE RADICAL ELEMENTS WITHOUT DIRECTLY AFFECTING THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE.
GRAHAM

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